

“Blessed Hope Again”

by Pastor Steve Hammond on 12/1/19

Text: Titus 2:11-14, at FBC of Newport, NH

//11 For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. 12 It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, 13 while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.//

—Titus 2:11-14 (NIV)

This passage is about the Blessed Hope of the Church. It is about the return of Jesus Christ. It is about Christmas—part II. Traditionally the season of Advent starts with a look at Jesus’ second coming as a way of appreciating his first coming. Or, maybe it’s so his first coming can teach us something about his second coming. It is that second option I am going to emphasize today.

Christmas has something to teach us about the Second Coming of Christ.

1) It will happen.

//11 For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people.//

Christmas has already happened. So, we should be confident that Christmas II, the second Advent, will also happen.

The grace of God has appeared in the person of Jesus Christ. The birth of Jesus has already rocked the world and continues to this day. It started with Zechariah & Elizabeth and their amazing birth of John the Baptist. Then Gabriel’s visit with Mary, then Joseph’s dream, then some shepherds, King Herod and some wise men. Then things settled down for about 30 years . . . but then all heaven broke loose as the full grown Jesus walked onto the scene and made himself known in our world. And the world hasn’t been the same since.

This one man, with no means to speak of, has simply brought a message and himself to the ears that wish to hear of a salvation that’s different from all others messages of salvation. This one doesn’t depend on our own personal perfection and righteousness. This one depends upon God and his grace, his forgiveness and his perfect sacrifice of his own Son. It’s the only salvation that actually works.

This Good News has transformed our world. However, it’s not a complete transformation yet. Individuals are free to choose. Some receive this Jesus as their Savior and King, while others reject and oppose him.

So we still see our world with a lot of corruption and sin and fighting ... just like in the world before Christ came. But now people have the option to be personally transformed, from the inside out, and joined together with the body of Christ, the church. It starts with repentance and forgiveness. From there the sky's the limit. There simply is no end in sight, other than to one day be conformed to the image of Christ himself.

Now if Jesus' first coming has already happened, then it's a sure thing his second coming will happen. The first thing leads to the second thing. When the baby is born, then the Man will come.

ILLUS: I not only went to celebrate Thanksgiving with my family in Maine, but I also went to celebrate my mother's 94th birthday, which was just a day different from Thanksgiving. Now, if my mother had not been born, then the hopes of seeing my mother at that Thanksgiving gathering would be less than slim, not to mention the hopes of my *own* appearance at that or any other Thanksgiving. However, she was indeed born. So I had every reason to hope to see her.

"But she's only human. What if she died before seeing her?"

That's actually a secondary matter. Her being born is the higher priority. And I was just using her for an illustration regarding the birth and second coming of Jesus. And guess what? Jesus died between those two events. Death could not undo the birth of Jesus, nor take away the Blessed Hope of the Church of seeing the face of Jesus. And it can not take away our hope of seeing one another when we are born again! We can hope again!

However, there's another important thing Christmas can teach us about the second Advent of Christ.

2) We will have to wait for it.

12 It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, 13 while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, //

This is hardly new news. The church has been waiting for close to two thousand years now. Ever since those first disciples saw Jesus rocket his way into the heavens at the ascension, we have been told to wait expectantly for his return.

But the news here from Christmas is the agreement about that waiting. The Old Testament saints had been waiting for the Messiah to make his first appearance for about . . . you guessed it, two thousand years. Maybe even more. In the mean time, all they had were prophetic hints here and there about this Savior coming. I say, "all they had," but over time it added up to quite a picture. His humble birth, his being in the

line of David, his sacrificial mission, even his identity with God. They had all the pieces right there, but most people had a hard time putting it all together.

Yet, still they waited, with expectation. Growing expectation. By the time Jesus was born there was a fevered pitch of expectation on the part of the people of Israel.

So, it's important to take note of these verses here. They instruct us in just how to wait for Christmas II. While we wait for it we should be saying "No" a lot. We should be saying "No" to the evil and ungodly things of this world, of which there are plenty. This isn't our *means* of salvation, but it is an expression of our hope of seeing the Savior. If we expect to see Jesus and we know he loves the smell of roses and hates the smell of garlic or pickles, why would we wait for him by saying "yes" to everyone who wants to sell us garlic soap or pickled scented shampoo?

Of course, I'm not really talking about garlic and pickles. I'm talking about sin. It has a spiritual smell to it. And when our hope is in meeting Jesus face to face, we should also set our hearts on pleasing him with the aroma of the Good News of Christ, which Paul spoke of to the Corinthians, //14 But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession **and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere.** 15 For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.// —2 Corinthians 2:14-15 and the accompanying fragrant fruit of the Holy Spirit in things like self-control and godliness.

Imagine if Mary or Joseph had been waiting for that first coming of Christ, but had been waiting without saying "no" to this sexual temptations of the day? Imagine if the shepherds had been waiting for their Messiah, while they were letting their sheep go astray and be eaten by wolves?

There is a way for us to wait for Jesus' second coming. And it is the way of faithfulness.

But, of course, whatever we imagine the coming of Christ to be like, it will be different. So how are we to focus our hope?

3) It will be different, but not disappointing.

//the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, //

Here is where Christmas and the Second Advent of Christ have so much to say to us. The "Blessed Hope of the Church" is spelled right out as "the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ," referring to the second coming of Jesus in the clouds of heaven. But it's spelled out in such a way that one could picture it being pretty much the same hope the saints of God had as they were anticipating the Savior's *first* coming. That's because it is the same hope.

The OT saints were hoping to see the Messiah. We NT saints are hoping to see the Messiah. The similarity is greater than the difference. And there are differences, of course. Here are some in brief:

- Advent 1 was looking for a Savior only hinted at.
- Advent 2 is looking for a Savior spelled out in the whole NT.
- Advent 1 was looking for a salvation not yet accomplished.
- Advent 2 is looking for a salvation already finished, though not yet extended fully.
- Advent 1 was looking as if it were Advent 2. They had no idea there would be a second coming, a “second Christmas” so to speak.
- Advent 2 is looking as if it were a repeat of Advent 1, as if Jesus had already come in secret. First century or 1843-44 (the Millerites and JW’s).
- Advent 1 was looking for the Christ to come for about 2,000 years. 400 years even after a special notice was given by Gabriel to Daniel.
- Advent 2 is still looking for the Christ to come again even after waiting about 2,000 years.
- Advent 1 had prophesy and *types* of Christ to look back on.
- Advent 2 has Christ himself to look back on.

Yet for all these differences, the common denominator is Jesus himself. Which is more important when you are celebrating someone’s birthday year after year? That those birthdays are all different? Or that the birthdays are all focused around the same exact person in each one? Surely the latter. The Blessed Hope of the Church is the looking forward, not to a completely different hope from the OT, but the same one. Because we are looking forward to seeing the same Messiah, the same Savior. Both hopes center on the joy of meeting the exact same Person.

There is but one Savior in which to put our faith and hope and love. And his name is Jesus.